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Introduction

Sorry for such a long list, you can skip it if you want, I would read Nightclan's apprentices' descriptions though.

Allegiances

Nightclan

Leader: Twilightstar - silver grey tom with white paws and amber eyes

[image]

Deputy: Blackpelt - longhaired black tom with amber eyes

Medicine Cat: Moonlight - Grey she-cat with a light grey chest and right forepaw, and yellow eyes

[image]

Warriors:

Greypounce - grey with darker flecks, she-cat with green eyes

Hazelfoot - hazel brown she-cat with yellow eyes

Icetail - white she-cat with grey stripes, with beautiful light blue eyes

Sparrowfoot - old tabby brown tom with white paws

Quickfoot - yellow/golden tabby tom

Sunstripe - orange tabby tom

Mudfall - white tom with a brown spotted back

Petalclaw - russet-brown she-cat with amber eyes

Apprentices:

Snowpaw - slightly long haired she-cat with white fur and blue eyes

[image]

Nightpaw - longhaired black tom with green eyes

[image]

Specklepaw - grey tom with darker flecks and amber eyes

[image]

Rosepaw - red and orange tortoiseshell she-cat with a white chest and white paws, amber eyes

[image]

Elders:

Twigstep - brown tabby she-cat

Queens:

Silverleap - light grey tabby she-cat with white paws

Dawnrise -fluffy creamy coloured she-cat with a brown mask around eyes and brown paws

Snowclan

Leader: Winterstar - White long-haired she-cat with blue eyes

[image]

Deputy: Whitepelt - White she-cat with green eyes

Medicine Cat: Owlmist - She-cat with brown mask around eyes and

brown paws with crystal blue eyes

Warriors:

Forestnight - Dusty black/brown tom

Breezefur - White tabby she-cat with very pale grey stripes

Thornstripe - Golden tabby she-cat

Kestrelheart - Light brown tabby tom with white chest

Autumnbird - brown and red tortoiseshell she-cat

Acornfur - Small brown tabby tom with green eyes

Spicetail - White she-cat with orange and red patches on one ear and tail tip

Moonmist - Black and white she-cat with blue eyes

Applefeather - Brown and red tortoiseshell she-cat

Runningshadow - Black and white tom

Apprentices:

Spikepaw - Small brown tabby tom

Hawkpaw - White tom with brown and black back

Birdpaw - Black tom with white chest and paws, and green eyes

Nettlepaw - Black and white she-cat with olive green eyes

Queens:

Raintail - Blue-grey she-cat

Barkwhisker - Dark brown tabby she-cat with a broad face and long whiskers

Elders:

Cave - Dark blue-grey tom

Stone - Slightly fluffy grey tabby tom

Cats Outside the Clans

Twilight - Slightly fluffy light grey tabby tom with yellow eyes (Dawnrise's and Owlmist's brother)

Rainwolf - Thick-furred blue/grey she-cat with deep blue eyes

Lynxheart - Thick furred golden/brown tabby tom with golden brown eyes

Prologue

[image]

The cave was silent, only the mystical echo of water, as it dripped from overhanging stones, could be heard. Snowpaw lifted her head calmly to gaze up at the cat in front of her. Despite Snowpaw's relaxed appearance, she could hardly contain the excitement within her. Snowpaw continued to gaze, wide-eyed, at the cat, eagerly awaiting her words.

"Snowpaw, is it your wish to enter the mysteries of Starclan as a medicine cat?" The cat spoke clearly with authority, gazing calmly at Snowpaw.

Standing straight and proud, hardly able to contain her excitement, Snowpaw answered, "I do."

"Then come forward." Her mentor's words were calm. Snowpaw stepped forwards gazing up at her mentor. Looking up to the high roof of the cave, her mentor continued, "Warriors of Starclan, I present you with this apprentice. She has chosen the path of a medicine cat. Grant her your wisdom and insight so that she may understand your ways and heal her Clan in accordance with your will." Her words echoed around the cave walls, as she delicately touched her nose to Snowpaw's, in a gesture of welcome.

Snowpaw turned to face the other medicine cats as they called out her new name. "Snowpaw. Snowpaw. Snowpaw." Snowpaw sat up proudly listening as her mentor joined in as well. There were only

two other medicine cats besides Snowpaw and her mentor; both Lilyfoot and her apprentice, Owlmist, sat opposite them across the small pool of cave water, calling out her name.

Snowpaw looked back to her mentor, Moonlight. Her mentor's grey pelt glowed silver with moonlight. Gazing into Moonlight's sparkling yellow gaze, Snowpaw's pelt bristled in excitement at the thought of learning all of the medicine cat secrets.

Turning to the others, Moonlight spoke again, "It is time to share tongues with our warrior ancestors now."

The other medicine cats murmured in agreement, and bent their heads to drink the moonlit water. Snowpaw crouched down to lap at the cold and gently glowing pool, feeling the stone ground cold against her thick white fur.

A sudden sweep of black swept her away, indicating that she had fallen asleep. A moment later she felt hard ground under her paws, and found herself padding though complete darkness. A sudden growl and a glint of sharp claws brought her to a clearing in the forest of her territory, where ferocious creatures were growling and battling with her clan. High-pitched yowls and deafening snarls filled her ears, while she watched savaging, tearing teeth snap just a whisker away from her friends. The spiked collared creatures were hunting down the clan members with glinting claws, their snouts were lean, and their legs long and muscular.

Sunstripe appeared in a flash of fury, bravely leaping onto the ferocious creature, only to be knocked back to the ground with a new scar endured. More and more cats, not just from Nightclan, were appearing, bravely leaping at the ferocious creatures in an attempt to defend each other and save their own lives. Snowpaw felt frozen, unable to move or help her suffering clanmates, as she watched her surroundings turn scarlet.

At last Snowpaw dropped down exhausted with the vision fading, but when she looked up, her surroundings had become starlit and a starry white cat had appeared. The cat spoke with a silky voice that carried great authority.

"Follow Cave's foot, to find the moon's love, whose son shall save Night"

Snowpaw blinked, suddenly overwhelmed, but the starry cat was already fading.

Snowpaw suddenly woke up startled, to find herself back in the cold cave. Water was dripping in a calm rhythm from the roof of the cave and into the pool, but her heart was still pounding with fear and she was panting hard from her dream. The others were still asleep, but Snowpaw was wide awake, overwhelmed by her dream. *It was a message from Starclan, why else would I receive this dream and the vision.*

At last the echo of the dripping water did its work, and Snowpaw's pounding heart slowed and her breath became steady. The coldness of the ground returned to her again, soothing her flushing hot fur.

Now that Snowpaw had recovered she was able to remember her dream more clearly: the fierce spiked-collar creatures, Sunstripe, both clans, and the starry white cat at the end. A ruffle from the other end of the pool interrupted her thoughts, and she looked up to see Lilyfoot waking, her orange tabby fur dim in the cave. A moment later the others woke as well.

Snowpaw sat up licking her ruffled fur as the others got ready to head back to camp, but her dream was still fresh in her mind. *Had the others had the same dream.* Snowpaw wondered as she gazed at them. But none of the other medicine cats looked disturbed or frightened, or at least didn't show it.

Nodding good-bye to Lilyfoot and Owlmist, Snowpaw followed her mentor out of the cave. A cool and gentle breeze ruffled her fur outside, and Snowpaw gazed up to see the half-moon peacefully floating above a clear night sky. Snowpaw couldn't imagine the fight scene from her dream happening in such a peaceful place, it just didn't seem possible, or at least Snowpaw hoped so.

As Snowpaw picked her way down the tumble of stones that led to the forest, the starry white cat's words came back to her:

Follow Cave's foot, to find the moon's love, whose son shall save Night.

What is that supposed to mean!

That's the Prologue done at last. It's VERY different from my previous Prologue so it would be best to read this one. :)

If there's any characters that you would like to see, please tell me and I'll find an image of them. :)

Chapter 1

[image]

Snowpaw delicately picked up the bundle of feverfew, the musty scent of the soft white petals was gentle to her nose, instantly calming her mind. More than a moon had passed since she had been made a medicine cat apprentice, and now she was well into the routine.

"Take those to Silverleap, they'll calm her fever down," Moonlight, Snowpaw's mentor, called to her from the back of the hollowed out den.

"Okay," Snowpaw mew was muffled through her bundle of herbs. Outside, the sky was blue and clear, a pale yellow sun blazed down into the camp, which was dotted with cats here and there.

Snowpaw sighed, she had been so busy with learning all sorts of herbs, as well as hunting and practising basic battle moves. Snowpaw let her thoughts wander a little as she slowly crossed the clearing to the warriors den, which was besides the nursery. Silverleap's fever wasn't too severe so she was allowed to stay in the warriors den as long as she didn't continue her warrior duties.

Snowpaw paused; a sudden thought had reached her mind. *The vision!* She had been so caught up in becoming a medicine cat that she hadn't had time to understand the white cat's words: *"Follow Cave's foot, to find the Moon's love, whose son shall save Night."*

I've been so busy! But what about the prophecy? It can wait a little longer, right? Snowpaw thought anxiously. *Just until everything's under control, that way I can think more clearly.* Hoping she had made the right decision, Snowpaw readjusted the herbs she was carrying so that they sat comfortably in her jaws.

Glancing to her left Snowpaw noticed her brother, Nightpaw, silently staring into the distance, lost in thought. Curious, Snowpaw walked over to him, and sat down, placing the feverfew on the

ground.

Snowpaw glanced at him for a moment, confused, and followed his gaze to find that he wasn't staring into the distance, but instead was staring at Rosepaw, who was enjoying a decent mouse outside the apprentice's den.

Snowpaw understood instantly; Nightpaw, possibly the bravest and most daring apprentice, who could stand up against senior warriors whenever he disagreed with them, or could boast about some magpie he had caught for a moon, didn't have the nerves to speak to Rosepaw. Nightpaw liked Rosepaw, that was for sure.

Snowpaw's whiskers twitched in amusement, she wanted to say something to encourage to her brother to talk to Rosepaw, but she didn't know what to say.

"Where's Specklepaw?" Snowpaw questioned, although she already knew that her other brother was out hunting with his mentor, Icetail. At least she wasn't sitting there awkwardly without anything to say.

"He's out hunting with Icetail," Nightpaw answered, though his voice sounded distant.

"Oh, I thought so," Snowpaw confessed. She paused for a moment, then after carefully choosing her words she spoke again, "Why don't you speak to her, she's your clanmate you know?"

Nightpaw turned to look at Snowpaw, his eyes were a pale green against a thick black pelt. He met Snowpaw's gaze, his eyes uncertain. "Oh, okay," he hesitated for a moment, looking at Rosepaw again, before cautiously padding down the gentle slope towards the apprentice's den.

Snowpaw sighed as she watched her brother walking over to Rosepaw. *I don't get why it's so hard to go and speak to someone you like.* Snowpaw thought. Picking up her bundle of feverfew again, Snowpaw set off to the warriors den.

She couldn't help but let out a *mrrr* of laughter as she wondered

why Nightpaw had to pick such a difficult cat to fall in love with. Just as her name describes, Rosepaw was as pretty as a rose with her beautifully dappled coat, but she could be as prickly as one too.

Focussing back on her task, Snowpaw realised just how grateful she should be; the clan was safe, well fed, and there was still two moons left of autumn to prepare for winter. Things couldn't be better, yet the vision of the sharp fanged and vicious creatures wouldn't leave Snowpaw's mind, sipping away the feeling that the clan was completely safe, even now.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 is finally here! Thank you for being so patient.

Snowpaw's words echoed through Nightpaw's mind; *She's your clanmate you know.* Nightpaw took a deep breath. He was the bravest apprentice; since when was he nervous or even scared? But there was something about Rosepaw; the way she blinked her gentle but intense amber eyes, the way her red and brown dappled pelt shone in the sunlight, and the way she silently walked on her small, soft, white paws, that made Nightpaw's heart flutter every time he saw her.

Nightpaw looked up as he got closer to the apprentices' den, Rosepaw was lying outside eating a mouse. Nightpaw sat down beside her, he could feel his heart thump with a rapid rhythm as he did so.

"Hi Rosepaw," Nightpaw's meow cracked as he spoke her name, and he ducked his head in embarrassment.

"Hi Nightpaw," Rosepaw answered, looking up, "how's training going with Blackpelt?" She asked, her amber eyes clear and intense in the sunlight.

"Uh, um," Nightpaw stammered, he wasn't expecting a question, "uh... good. Blackpelt taught me a new move this morning, do you want me to show you?"

"Sure," Nightpaw heard the reply as he paced a few steps away to give himself more room. He felt more confident demonstrating battle moves than sitting about and chatting.

"It goes something like this," Nightpaw heaved himself up onto his hind legs so that his forepaws were in the air. Curling his tail around his hind legs, he lashed out with his forepaws, as if attacking an enemy, but as he drew his paws inwards again, he lost

balance and stumbled backwards. A reply came to him as he crashed onto the ground, defeated.

"Wow! I bet that move is going to be really effective next time we battle Snowclan," Rosepaw laughed sarcastically.

Nightpaw staggered up, embarrassed. "Um, that isn't what I'm supposed to do." He felt a little stung by Rosepaw's words, he was hoping to impress her not make a mess of himself.

"Let me show you how it's done," Rosepaw teased. She got up from where she was lying, and gracefully padded a tail length away from where Nightpaw stood. "I think something like this might be more effective," Rosepaw meowed, with a glint of amusement in her eyes.

Rosepaw effortlessly rose onto her hind legs, and swiftly wrapped her tail around her hind legs, a technique Nightclan cats used in battle to protect their tails. With smooth, flowing strokes, Rosepaw lashed out with her white paws.

Nightpaw caught a glimpse of Rosepaw's sharp slicing claws in the light, concealed by her soft deceiving paws. Rosepaw then gently fell back onto her forepaw's unlike Nightpaw's clumsy fall.

Nightpaw blinked; he didn't know what to say, all he could think of was what an embarrassment he had made of himself. Rosepaw was only a moon older than he was, but he had expected to catch up to her level of training by now. What could he possibly do now to convince Rosepaw what a great cat he was. To Nightpaw's surprise he heard Rosepaw giggle. He looked up, perplexed.

"Don't worry too much about it, that move of yours might work one day," Rosepaw suggested.

"How?" Nightpaw questioned, he didn't understand what Rosepaw was saying.

"Well, maybe it could be used to trick the opponent. You can make them think that you're going to attack, but then you fall, so you end up tricking them," Rosepaw mewed casually, her eyes were hopeful as though she truly believed it would work.

Nightpaw paused, confused, he still didn't get what Rosepaw was suggesting. Then Nightpaw spotted the gleam of delight and amusement in Rosepaw's eyes. "Oh," Nightpaw finally understood, Rosepaw was joking around with him; she wasn't actually being serious, "well I guess I would not only trick my enemy but then squish an unsuspecting cat behind me," Nightpaw joked. Rosepaw laughed, she was obviously enjoying Nightpaw's company. Nightpaw suddenly felt bad that he hadn't spoken to her earlier besides the occasional 'hi, how are you?'.

"You too are getting along well," the low mew surprised Nightpaw, and he swirled around to see Mudfall approach. "How about you too join me on a hunt, Rosepaw is improving, you should see her when she hunts," Mudfall glanced at his apprentice, his soft white fur ruffled in the breeze, and his yellow gaze rested on the apprentices as he anticipated their reply.

"Let's go then already, we can't stay here all day," Rosepaw mewed briskly, and with that she raced off towards the rocky slope. Nightpaw dashed off after her, his paws feeling as light as ever; his anxiety had finally been washed away by a cool breeze, and much easier than he had ever imagined.

Please feel free to comment on any improvements for my work or any thoughts on the story. I would love to know what my readers think. Thank you again for being so patient, I will get onto chapter 3 as soon as possible.

Chapter 3

Sorry that it took so long to update. I've been busy, and chapter 3 is really long. Enjoy! Please feel free to comment.

Snowpaw rolled onto her back, relieved to be away from her chores for the afternoon. Tonight would be her first gathering, and Moonlight had told Snowpaw to take a rest before the big night.

Gazing up, Snowpaw stretched luxuriantly and watched the sky light up in an array of soft pinks and blazing orange. The murmur of her clanmates sharing tongues flowed around her, peaceful and gentle.

Sudden loud mewling from the rocky slope brought Snowpaw to her paws again. When she recognised her brother's thick black pelt, along with the rest of the hunting patrol, she relaxed and sank back onto her belly.

Nightpaw was padding down the rocky slope carrying two mice, however, he still managed to chat loudly to Rosepaw, who was carrying a vole. Rosepaw laughed around the prey she held, at what appeared to be a joke Nightpaw had made. *It's good to see Nightpaw back to his usual self again.* Snowpaw thought.

"It's so cool that your mentor is your father and clan deputy!" Snowpaw heard Rosepaw exclaim to Nightpaw as they walked past, after having placed their prey in the fresh-kill pile.

This brought Snowpaw's thoughts to her family. She was the daughter of Blackpelt, Nightclan's deputy, and Greypounce. She had two brothers, Nightpaw and Specklepaw. Nightpaw's thick black pelt resembled their father and so did his personality; humorous and adventurous. Specklepaw, however, resembled his mother; with his speckled grey pelt and quiet nature. His long limbs carried him swiftly when he ran. Snowpaw resembled neither, instead she resembled Blackpelt's sister, Whitepelt, whom Snowpaw had never

met, but all she knew was that she was Snowclan's deputy. It was odd to think that the two clan's deputies were littermates, but then again it was only several moons ago that neither clan existed at all.

A story lingered in Snowpaw's mind, and Twigstep's words came rushing back.

Long ago the forest was ruled by countless groups, too small to be clans. Territories would overlap, so there was constant fighting. One day a war broke out, one that will be remembered for generations to come. It involved each and every single one of these groups, your father was merely a young tom back then. It was on that day that, in the mist of the war, that Blackpelt and Whitepelt, brother and sister, realised that in order to regain peace two clans must be formed. So it did, Blackpelt and Whitepelt warned the fighters and commanded that two clans must form in order to regain peace. These clans came to be known as Nightclan and Snowclan. Blackpelt and Whitepelt, however, insisted that they should not be the first leaders. It was Twilightstar and Winterstar who stood up that day and offered to become the first leaders ever of these clans, with Blackpelt and Whitepelt as their deputies.

"Wow!" Was Snowpaw's answer to the wise cat's words, and here she was again, reliving the story in her mind. It was astounding to think that many of the cats who stood before her were involved in the Great battle.

Snowpaw observed her clanmates. The calm Icetail sat near the entrance to a dark crack in the rocky wall, which surrounded the whole camp. The dark crack was called the training-cave. Apprentices would practice their night vision in there, a traditional skill of Nightclan cats. Glancing over to the opposite side of camp, Snowpaw saw Rosepaw's parents, Sunstripe and Petalclaw, sharing tongues. Snowpaw watched as Petalclaw licked Sunstripes ear, she thought Petalclaw was possibly the prickliest cat in the clan, but she knew inside there was a kind, protective heart.

Near the Greatrock, Blackpelt and Twilightstar were discussing clan issues. Nearby, Hazelfoot, the long-legged, agile brown she-cat, was picking a mouse from the fresh-kill pile and walking over to join her parents; Sparrowfoot and Twigstep.

It was then that Snowpaw noticed her tail thumping the ground in excitement and she turned back to where her leader sat. Twilightstar simply nodded to Blackpelt, turned, and made his way up the Greatrock.

He's going to announce who's going to the gathering tonight! Snowpaw's excitement rose.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather here beneath the Greatrock for a clan meeting," he yowled, and the clan began to make their way beneath the rock. The sky had already grown dark and it was time to leave for the gathering.

"I have decided who is going to the gathering tonight," Twilightstar paused as if recalling the names, then continued, "Blackpelt, Nightpaw, Moonlight, Snowpaw ..."

Snowpaw felt surge of excitement at her name.

"... Greypounce, Icetail, Specklepaw, Rosepaw, Mudfall and Twigstep," Twilightstar finished.

Snowpaw saw Hazelfoot's disappointment in not going, but it was soon replaced with excitement as everyone started gathering.

Nightpaw and Rosepaw were up on their paws in a moment and raced each other to the camp entrance where they awaited the rest of the group.

"We leave now," Twilightstar commanded, and with that he flicked his tail and leaped down the Greatrock.

Snowpaw weaved her way through her clanmates as the chosen cats gathered at the slope. She managed to find Specklepaw just as the patrol dashed out of camp.

Side by side, the two littermates raced through the forest, pelts brushing. They raced in silence; it is at times like this that littermates' bonds are strongest, and not a word had to be spoken. Excitement buzzed throughout the patrol, giving energy to Snowpaw's paws.

At last the trees of the forest gave way to a slope. A little past the bottom, a clearing encircled by large, slanting rocks came into view.

"Wow," breathed Specklepaw, the first word he had spoken that night.

Snowpaw's whiskers quivered with excitement, she could see feline shapes moving about in the moonlit scenery. "It's amazing," Snowpaw replied.

Gazing into Specklepaw's moonlit, amber eyes, she saw her own excitement reflected in his eyes.

On a silent signal the patrol darted down the slope. Moments later they cleared a small bubbling creak, and before she knew it, the large slanting rocks towered above them.

Twilightstar paused, staring into the stones, then with a flick of his tail the patrol split up, as they wounded their way through the narrow gaps. The gathering was held under a truce, and Snowpaw thought it was wise to choose a meeting place where patrols were forced to scatter out.

Within seconds Snowpaw found herself at the edge of the moonlit clearing, filled with cats. Snowpaw hesitated, it felt odd to enter a group of strangers without any of her clanmates. She looked around the hollow hoping to see some of her other clanmates emerging. At last she saw them waiting patiently in the shadows along the edge of the hollow.

As if on signal they all emerged into the dim light and mingled with these unfamiliar cats. Feeling more at ease, Snowpaw began to walk into the crowd. A sudden thought came to Snowpaw's mind. *What if I can get clues for the prophecy here?* She wasn't sure where to start but as the crowds parted for a split second, her attention was drawn to dark blue-grey cat. The cat's tabby lines were faintly visible and before Snowpaw could get a better look, the crowd shifted back into place.

Curious, Snowpaw padded towards where she had seen the cat, but the crowd was thick there and wouldn't budge.

Snowpaw flicked her ears in annoyance as she tried to find a way around them. "Excuse me, I'm trying to get through!" But no one heard her. Letting out an irritated grunt she looked around. *May as well meet someone else.*

Nightpaw appeared in the midst of the crowd; he was talking to two apprentices. Feeling a spark of hope and excitement, Snowpaw padded over to join them.

"Hi," she meowed. Three pairs of eyes turned to gaze at her at once.

"Oh, hi Snowpaw. This is Hawkpaw and Spikepaw, they're apprentices just like us,"

Snowpaw observed the two toms, one was a small brown tabby, the other looked muscular but not the broad-shouldered type. The small tabby ducked his head as if he disliked crowds, but he looked older than Snowpaw, so this couldn't be his first time.

"Hi! So your Nightpaw's sister? I hear you're a medicine cat apprentice. This my brother, Spikepaw," the large tom nodded to the brown tabby.

"Hi," Spikepaw meowed, but his voice wasn't loud and confident like his brother's. At first glance, he didn't look like a threatening cat, but Snowpaw's heart lurched when she saw moonlight glint off needle thin claws; this was not a cat you would want to face in battle.

"Yes, my mentor's Moonlight," Snowpaw managed to reply, recovering back to the present.

"Is this your first gathering?" Spikepaw meowed, he straightened up, and was directing his question to Snowpaw and Nightpaw.

"Yes," it was Nightpaw's turn to answer.

"It's amazing, isn't it?" Hawkpaw commented enthusiastically, he was a brown tom, with a black overcoat and a white undercoat. His amber eyes glinted on his brown and white face. He reminded Snowpaw of Nightpaw: his strong body and enthusiastic personality, just a different colour.

"I love it!" Nightpaw answered with equal enthusiasm.

Hawkpaw's face suddenly turned questioning, he was staring curiously at Nightpaw and Snowpaw. "You two look like you've been apprentices longer though,"

Snowpaw exchanged a glance with Nightpaw, "That's true, we've been apprentices for about two moons," Snowpaw meowed.

Hawkpaw frowned, even more confused, "but then you should have been to at least one gathering before now."

"We were born two days after a gathering, so we were made apprentices two days after what should have been our first gathering," Nightpaw explained, "on the night that should have been our second gathering we didn't come either, we were so enthusiastic about training that day that we tired ourselves out and couldn't go."

Hawkpaw blinked, "wow!"

Spikepaw glanced up, "how did you manage! I remembered hardly standing still when my first gathering came round," he breathed.

"We didn't! I was practically bouncing out of my fur for today," Nightpaw laughed.

Snowpaw suddenly blinked and looked around. She turned to her brother, "have you seen Specklepaw?"

Nightpaw blinked and glanced over his shoulder, but shook his head when he faced Snowpaw. A sudden yowl silenced the clearing. Everyone gazed up to see the two leaders standing on the jutting rock.

"It is time to share the news of the clans," Twilightstar yowled.

Ears pricked, Snowpaw listened intently. She was eager to hear what the leaders would speak of. At the foot of the rock, Blackpelt sat next to a slender white she-cat. Recognition shot through Snowpaw. *That must be Whitepelt! Snowclan's deputy, and Blackpelt's sister!* Whitepelt's eyes were a sparkling green, and her pelt was

white just like Snowpaw's. Her fur was sleek, unlike Snowpaw's fluffed out pelt. *I can't believe I'm related to her!* Drawing away from her thoughts, Snowpaw gazed back at the jutting rock. Twilightstar nodded to Winterstar, who stepped forward to speak.

"Warriors of both clans, I am proud to say that all is well in Snowclan this leaf-fall. The prey is running well, and our warriors are thriving," her blue eyes shone calmly, and her thick, white pelt shone in the moonlight.

"So you call autumn 'leaf-fall'?" Snowpaw whispered to Hawkpaw. A sharp hush from a warrior behind her silenced Snowpaw. "Sorry," Snowpaw whispered to them.

She glanced back at Hawkpaw, and he nodded, "sometimes we do."

Focussing back to the leaders, Snowpaw watched as Winterstar stepped back, signalling for Twighlightstar to speak. Stepping forwards, he paused, then looked up and spoke.

"Firstly I would like to welcome our three newest apprentices," he looked down at Snowpaw, and she felt a jolt of excitement. *He's going to name us!*.

"I am proud to welcome Snowpaw, Nightpaw and Specklepaw." His announcement was followed by yowls of congratulations, her name, along with her brothers', echoed around her. Her heart swelled with pride, but the moment was over too quick. The yowls soon faded to hushed whispers, as the clans drew their attention back to Twilightstar; he wasn't finished speaking.

"Nightclan is doing well. However, I have decided that I should bring to attention the recent activity of the twolegs. They appear to be planning something, and venturing closer to our territory every day. It is not much of a concern right now, but I'm afraid this is only the start," he paused, then gazed at Winterstar, "do you happen to know of any of this?"

"Snowclan has experienced nothing of the sort," she meowed simply. It sounded as if she was trying to prove that Snowclan wasn't weak or troubled. Twilightstar narrowed his eyes, but said

nothing more.

"Then this gathering is dismissed," Twilightstar announced, and with that he leaped down the jutting rock, and signalled for Nightclan to follow. Surprised, Snowpaw followed, waving goodbye to Hawkpaw and Spikepaw with her tail.

The gathering was lively, but now she walked with tired, heavy muscles. All she wanted to do was curl up and sleep.

Chapter 4

Sleep enveloped Snowpaw like mist. Exhaustion evaporated from her muscles, and Snowpaw allowed her shoulders to sag. A rush of blackness gently swept her to a starry scene. A twinkling sky surrounded Snowpaw, even under her paws where she could still feel earthy ground. Snowpaw dragged her eyes from the endless expanse below her to a glistening shape in the distance. The shimmering figure padded closer and shock jolted through Snowpaw when she realised it was the same white tom from her vision.

The tom approached, his thick, white pelt speckled with stars. Thoughts rushed through Snowpaw's mind; questions about the vision and prophecy. Where am I meant to start? Who do I go to? How can I possibly do this? I need help! What does the prophecy even mean! Snowpaw opened her mouth to speak, but no words came out.

The snowy tom's tail muffled her choked mews, and when he drew his tail away Snowpaw suddenly felt sleepy and calm. *No don't go!* Snowpaw expected to find herself awake but when nothing happened she realised that her mind was still alert and focussed on the tom. Her jaws, however, were affected by the spell and wouldn't speak.

She gazed up, expecting him to speak. His soft blue eyes only added to her sleepy state. "You don't know who I am, do you?" His gentle voice asked. Snowpaw shook her head, it was all she could do. "I'm Echo, your grandfather. Blackpelt's father," he explained. Shock was all Snowpaw felt, then comprehension; it was then that she realised she was the spitting image of Echo, except a she-cat.

"I'm guessing that you're wondering the *real* reason that came in your dream," he mewed. Snowpaw nodded. "I've come to tell you about the prophecy."

At last Snowpaw regained her energy to speak, but this time she was more settled. She guessed Echo had taken off the dreamy spell. "What am I supposed to do? I don't know where to start," she mewed miserably.

Echo's soft blue eyes were round with sympathy. "I've come to tell you not to worry. You are still too young to understand the prophecy, and too busy. Concentrate on your training first. When the time comes to solve the prophecy you will know," he replied.

Snowpaw relaxed, but she was still anxious, "but where do I start? Just so I know when the time comes."

The snowy cat's gaze turned thoughtful, "Starclan doesn't send these prophecies just for the fun of it. We are given these prophecies by the stars, so we don't know the answer. Only living cats can solve them," he paused, "but I've been thinking about it, and the other Starclan cats agree, that the prophecy is about ancestry and family trees," he mewed.

Snowpaw was thoughtful for a moment, "so, I just have to follow a family line, and discover who the descendant of the clues is," Snowpaw mewed conclusively.

"It's a starting point," the white tom mewed encouragingly, "but remember, don't worry about it; there is plenty of time. When the time comes you will know when to start."

Snowpaw glanced up, she felt energetic and refreshed, a new spark of hope filled her heart. "Thankyou Echo!" She mewed.

Echo nodded and waved his tail in good-bye as Snowpaw dashed out into the empty expanse. Night clouds brushed past her and her consciousness soon faded as she drifted into a dreamless but peaceful sleep.

Don't worry, I'll fast-forward to "when the time comes", so you don't have to wait long :)

Chapter 5

Nightpaw twisted in the air, landing with a thump on the earthy floor and tossing the moss back into the sky. Specklepaw was there to receive it, clamping it in his jaws and flicking his tail to land neatly on the ground before tossing it again. Across the hollow, Icetail observed, her eyes half closed as she dosed in the shady hollow. Nightpaw was thankful for the shade, it was cool against his pelt, relieving him of the heavy heat of the day. Many moons had passed since his first gathering and green-leaf was finally upon them.

In a flash of fur, Rosepaw snatched the moss from the air, briskly spinning round and batting the moss towards Nightpaw. The moss continued to be flung and thrown between the apprentices, as they dived, flicked, twisted and spun.

"Cats of the Meadow will defeat you with moss! That'll show you for entering our territory," Specklepaw roared enthusiastically. Nightpaw recalled the ancient cats Twigstep had told them about, the cats who lived in groups too small to be clans and were constantly fighting over overlapping territories.

Oh, so you want to play that game I see. The thought entered Nightpaw's mind as he leaped onto Specklepaw, bowling him over, "well, you'll never defeat the Creek Warriors!" he yowled. Specklepaw's eyes lit up at the challenge but before he could leap back at Nightpaw, a soft voice called into the hollow.

"Cats of the Meadow? Creek Warriors? What's that? Where did you hear that from?" Standing on the elevated edge of the hollow was Snowpaw, but something was odd about her. Her fur was ruffled, her light blue eyes lit with concern, and her posture was tense. It was only then that Nightpaw noticed the eerie silence that gripped the forest, when it should be filled with birdsong.

Specklepaw's voice broke the silence, "it's one of the ancient cat groups. The ones Twigstep told us about. Some of our clanmates were part of them."

Sudden realisation flashed in Snowpaw's eyes. "Thanks Specklepaw, I've got to go now," she meowed hastily, before turning to bound through the forest.

"Somethings up," Nightpaw commented when she was gone.

"She did look worried," Specklepaw added. Rosepaw, who had been silent the whole time, finally spoke.

"The forest. It's so quiet. I didn't notice that before."

There was a crunch of foliage, and Icetail silently padded over to the group. Her gaze was thoughtful and distant, and she sniffed the air before speaking. "We better be careful, it's unusual for the forest to be so silent during green-leaf," she meowed softly. Her soft blue gaze turned to Specklepaw, "I think we should practice a few of your battle moves," she mewed. "You two should go for a hunt," she suggested to Rosepaw and Nightpaw.

Nightpaw nodded but his thoughts were far away. *Why was Snowpaw so interested in the ancient cats?*

"Okay, bet I can catch more prey!" Rosepaw challenged.

"Oh, yes, okay!" Nightpaw shook his thoughts away.

"Be careful out there," was Icetail's call as the two apprentices scrambled out of the clearing and raced into the foliage of the forest.

They sprinted side by side, their fur brushing. Their paws thrummed against the dusty earth, and they darted over twigs and through bracken. The thrumming soon slowed, as they began to walk, allowing the dappled sunlight filtering through the trees warm their pelts.

"Let's hunt on the northern boundary," Rosepaw suggested.

"Sure, no-one's been there in days, we'll catch so much! I can just imagine us *trying* to drag all that prey back to camp," Nightpaw laughed.

"You'll probably come up with some strange way to carry the prey, like that time you tried carrying it on your back," Nightpaw loved Rosepaw's cheeky mew, he couldn't imagine a day without her.

"Race you to the border," Nightpaw dared, after they had walked for a while.

"Be carefully what you say," Rosepaw answered, and with that she darted forward, quick as a snake. They raced again through the foliage, but Nightpaw was focussed on the seizing silence, followed by a low, bone-chilling hum, that seemed to be slowly growing louder as they ran towards the border. Nightpaw's paw steps faltered, but soon gained speed again when he noticed a gap in the trees, revealing open blue sky. *That wasn't there before! The edge of the forest isn't here yet.*

"Rosepaw!" But she didn't hear, "Rosepaw!" Nightpaw screeched over the progressively growing hum, but Rosepaw was too keen on the race to hear. She was fast approaching the clearing Nightpaw had noticed. Taking in a sharp-breath, Nightpaw rushed forward, catching up with Rosepaw at last. *She's so fast!* With a heave Nightpaw leaped into the air, crashing down on Rosepaw just as they burst out into the clearing.

"Hey! What was that ...." Her voice faded, her clear amber eyes widening as she looked ahead. Nightpaw released her, as they gaped at the scene.

Giant, bright yellow machines were munching down on trees, shaking their roots and rattling their branches, until the whole tree collapsed in a flurry of leaves. The clearing was open dirt - not a tree in sight - and the air was filled with choking dust. More yellow monsters were eating up the trees, and Nightpaw spotted Two-legs shouting commands to each other. He couldn't even see the thunderpath from here, which should mark the border. Instead there was just blaring monsters and dusty air ahead.

"No, no... the forest," Rosepaw whispered, Nightpaw gazed at her clear amber eyes, and her beautiful tortoise-shell fur, he wished there was something he could say to comfort her, but his words were choked down in fear. *What's happening?* The humming was loud and overwhelming here, no prey would be caught today, not here anyway.

"Let's go, this is no place for a cat," he murmured, nudging the stunned Rosepaw back into the safety of the forest. *We must warn Nightclan!*

For those who haven't read the original Warrior series, a thunderpath is the cat word for a road, and a Two-leg is the cat word for a human. Getting more exciting I hope :)

Chapter 6

Really long chapter by the way. Enjoy :)

The den was quiet when Snowpaw returned with her bundle of catmint; Moonlight was out collecting yarrow. *Watermint, tansy, burdock, and now catmint. That should do it.* Placing her fresh bundle beside the others, Snowpaw padded to the edge of the hollow den. *Now for some serious work.*

It had been many moons since her meeting with Echo; the wise tom had told her to wait till 'the time had come' for her to fulfil the prophecy. *Now it is that time. It won't be long before I receive my full name, and I really want to figure out this prophecy before I do.*

Back in the training hollow, Specklepaw had told her about the ancient cats – and who knew most about them. *Of course! Twigstep! How did I not think of it before!* The brown tabby elder was sure to know a lot about the ancient cats.

Snowpaw hoped that learning about the ancient cats would lead her to the cat in the prophecy. Echo had said himself that the prophecy was about following a family line. *Follow Cave's foot, to find the moon's love, whose son shall save Night.* The words echoed in Snowpaw's mind, *surely I will recognise any ancient cat names related to the prophecy.*

Watching the clan as they went about their daily routine, Snowpaw realised she would need an excuse to visit Twigstep, if she wanted to avoid any suspicious questions from Moonlight.

I think I know what to do, but she wrinkled her nose at the thought. Picking up a stick with a wad of moss, she prepared some mouse bile and dipped it in. *Yep, I'm going to have to remove ticks from Twigstep's pelt.*

Twitching her nose at the smell, Snowpaw padded across the

clearing to a wide, hollow tree stump, where the elder's den was located. Inside it was spacious; enough room to fit four cats with ease. Twigstep was lying on her side, enjoying the cool of the den.

"I've come to remove ticks from your pelt," Snowpaw mumbled around the twig.

"Come in, it'll be nice to have a check-up," she mewed, welcoming her in with warm green eyes.

Snowpaw began parting Twigstep's fur, checking for ticks. "You know, I've been thinking about the ancient cat groups a lot lately," she began, picking her words carefully; she didn't want to arouse suspicion, "and I've decided that I wanted to learn more about them," she finished, pausing in her work to hear Twigstep's reply.

"So what do you want me to do about it?" Twigstep asked, her green eyes gleaming. For a moment Snowpaw panicked. *What if she doesn't want to tell me about them.* But then she relaxed remembering the kind and patient cat Twigstep was.

"I... was thinking you would teach me about them," she stumbled uncertainly.

Relief surged through Snowpaw when Twigstep's green gaze warmed. "Of course. I would love to teach you about them." Relaxed now, Snowpaw started parting Twigstep's fur again. "So what do you want to know?" Was Twigstep's question.

"Everything!" Snowpaw blurted out, before she could stop herself, "I mean... maybe I could learn about who's in the groups and what groups there were," she corrected herself. *Hopefully I'll pick up a family root to follow. There must be a name that I will recognise from the prophecy.*

"Okay," Twigstep's eyes were curious but she said nothing. "Well, there's the Creek Warriors and Cats of the Meadow, those two were the biggest groups, almost big enough to be clans, but not quite." She paused, as if thinking deeply about something.

Snowpaw realised that she was no longer paying attention to her

work, and almost missed a tick climbing through Twigstep's fur. Dabbing it with the bile, Snowpaw couldn't help but feel triumphant as the tick dropped to the ground. She continued subconsciously parting the tabby fur as Twigstep continued.

"There's also the WeatherTribe, Moongazers, Peakroamers ... and many more. Too many to remember actually," she meowed.

"What group are you from?" Snowpaw queried.

"Creek Warriors," she replied proudly.

"Who else was part of the Creek Warriors?" *Hopefully one of their names are related to the prophecy. I'll know so when I hear it.*

"Well, let's see ... from Nightclan there was ... me of course, Sparrowfoot ..." Her voice faded, and Snowpaw followed her gaze. Outside, in the clearing, Sparrowfoot was dropping off some prey at the fresh-kill pile. Snowpaw suddenly felt a rush of sorrow for Twigstep; Sparrowfoot was her mate, and should have moved into the elders den with her, however, he had stubbornly refused, stating that he could continue his warrior duties. *She must be heart-broken.* When Snowpaw looked back, Twigstep's sorrowful gaze was gone, and she continued with her list. "Hazelfoot and Dawnrise. There's no point naming the others since you've never met them before though." *No, no! I need to know! None of them sound like they're part of the prophecy, at least not yet.*

"No, please go on. I want to hear them all," Snowpaw calmly meowed, despite the urgency surging beneath her.

"Okay, if you insist. There was Gorseear, he had a floppy ear, I thought it was quite amusing and cute. And there was also Starlingflight, Shadetail ..." Snowpaw listened intently, hoping she would know who was part of the prophecy, and kin to the cat who was meant to 'save night'. *If I'm going to follow a family line, I better start off with a cat from the ancient groups.* But none of the names stood out to Snowpaw, or at least sounded familiar.

"... Flareblitz ... and that's all. At least that's all the cats I ever knew," Twigstep finished.

No, no! That can't be all! "What about the Cats of the Meadow," Snowpaw mewed rapidly. She flinched when Twigstep's eyes darkened for a moment, but then she sighed.

"The Creek Warriors and Cats of the Meadow didn't get along very well. To be honest, they were the biggest rivals any cat had ever seen; constantly fighting, mocking, and starting wars," she mewed regretfully.

That explains why Specklepaw and Nightpaw were acting them out.

"That was long ago though. When the clans were created, Whitepelt and Blackpelt, the founders of the clans, decided that each ancient cat group should split up between the two clans to prevent any past rivalry from forming again. Now that I've gotten to know cats from the Cats of the Meadow, like Petalclaw and Mudfall, I've found out that they're not that bad after all," her eyes were distant as if reliving the memories, perhaps of the Great Battle, or even further back. "I've always thought that the conflict between the two groups was pointless," she murmured, more to herself than anyone else, Snowpaw realised.

Paws scuffing on dirt brought Snowpaw to turn around. Walking through the entrance to the elder's den was Petalclaw. "Seems like the apprentices are having too much fun to do their chores," the russet-brown she-cat muttered under her breath.

She dropped the squirrel she carried at Twigstep's paws. "Here's your squirrel. What are you two talking about?" She mewed.

Tension gripped Twigstep and Snowpaw, and silence took over for a moment. *Should we tell her, would she be offended?* Petalclaw's amber eyes were fixed on them, awaiting their reply. She didn't act suspicious though, only mildly curious.

To Snowpaw's surprise, Twigstep answered honestly, "we were talking about the ancient clans; like the Creek Warriors and Cats of the Meadow – "

"– Oh! Creek Warriors. They think it's such a good name, that *they* are the only Warriors..." Petalclaw cut her off.

Snowpaw wasn't surprised by her taunt voice, she was pricklier than her daughter, Rosepaw, but she couldn't help tensing at her words. It took Snowpaw a moment to realise that her hostility wasn't aimed at Twigstep, instead she was looking up and around, flicking her tail this way and that and rolling her eyes to emphasize her words.

Snowpaw glanced at Twigstep, unsure what to do as Petalclaw went on. At first Twigstep's green eyes were wide with surprise, but they were soon replaced with a look that said 'seriously, do you have to go on?'

Suddenly Petalclaw stopped awkwardly, glancing at Twigstep as if only just realising what she was saying. "Umm ... well that was a long time ago of course, and they're not that bad," she stammered. "I better get onto my Warrior duties," she added hastily swivelling around to walk out of the den. "Enjoy the squirrel, Twigstep," she called as she left, her tone lighter, despite the still clinging tension.

Snowpaw turned to Twigstep shocked, but Twigstep only looked back at her with an amused look that said 'well wasn't that awkward?'

Unsure how to continue their conversation, Snowpaw listened to her father organise patrols out in the clearing. "We haven't been to the northern border by the thunderpath in a while, not even for hunting. Sunstripe, can you take Greypounce and Hazelfoot to that border?"

Drawing back to where she was in the elder's den, Snowpaw was about to ask Twigstep a question when yowling outside interrupted her. Her blood turned ice cold when she recognised the owners of the panic-stricken yowls. *Oh no! Night paw and Rosepaw!* Bursting out of the hollow tree, Snowpaw rushed into the clearing, with Twigstep just behind her. Nightpaw and Rosepaw were dashing down the fern entrance and into the camp.

Everyone looked up, their fur ruffled by their fear scent. "What's happened?" Snowpaw called out. Nightpaw's sides were heaving and Rosepaw's eyes were unusually wide.

"Twolegs ... twolegs, and ... yellow monsters! The forest, it's all gone!" Nightpaw puffed out between breaths, his green eyes wide with shock.

A grey pelt appeared at the corner of Snowpaw's eye, and she turned to see Twilightstar emerging from his den beneath the Greatrock, his amber eyes flashing in the sunlight. "What's going on?" he bellowed.

Blackpelt's eyes were serious, "Nightpaw and Rosepaw have seen twolegs and monsters at the northern border, apparently the forest's being destroyed," he responded.

Twilightstar's eyes hardened as he thought for a moment, then he climbed up the Greatrock, and called out to his clan, "let all those old enough to catch their own prey gather here for a clan meeting!"

Most of the clan had gathered already, anxiously mewing words to one another. There was a rustle in the bramble nursery and Dawnrise poked her head out, and sat outside the entrance with her two newly born kits: Mudkit and Skykit. The two kits were hardly a moon old. Silverleap followed, her belly round with expected kits, but they weren't due for a while.

Snowpaw noticed Icetail coming back from training with Specklepaw at her side. The two sat down along with the rest of the gathering cats. A moment later, Moonlight returned with a bundle of yarrow. Her eyes lit up with concern when she saw the gathered cats, and she hurried to join them. Picking a spot for herself, Snowpaw sat down beside her mother, Greypounce, and her friend, Hazelfoot.

"As most of you have already heard, Nightpaw and Rosepaw have found twolegs at the northern border, and according to them, they are destroying our forest." Twilightstar's announcement was followed by gasps of shock and squawks of distress.

"How can they do that!" Silverleap gasped. Twilightstar raised his tail for silence, and the meows slowly died down.

"Rosepaw, Nightpaw, can you please explain in more detail what

you saw," he commanded.

Nightpaw stood up, his fur ruffled, "we were hunting and didn't notice the noise at first, but as we got closer to the northern border I noticed a dreadful humming in the air. When we got there we found that the forest next to the thunderpath was gone!"

Rosepaw's eyes were calmer now, and her fur was sleek again, "There was nothing but dust, bare earth, and those twolegs with their strange, yellow monsters," she finished bleakly, her eyes dull.

More yowls and murmurs followed, too loud to be quietened. *What are we meant to do now!* Snowpaw thought. After what felt like ages, the noise settled.

"We will send extra patrols to the northern border, and no-one is to go there alone. Nightclan must remain strong, whatever it may face!" Twilightstar declared. Yowls of approval and determination filled the clearing.

But sending more patrols isn't going to stop the twolegs! Snowpaw thought. Despite her concerns, Snowpaw yowled along, she could only hope they were right and that Nightclan would remain strong.

Chapter 7

Snowpaw settled down to eat a nice looking mouse. Evening light enveloped the clearing, and a slowly growing dark sky stretched above. The senior warriors were discussing what to do about the twolegs, behind the Greatrock. *I'm glad they're doing something about it, for a second I thought they weren't going to.*

Gentle paw steps brought Snowpaw to look up. "Hi Snowpaw, mind if I join you?" It was Hazelfoot, her brown pelt was lit gently by the evening light.

"Sure," was Snowpaw's reply. Hazelfoot settled beside her, with a grey vole.

"What have you been up to lately?" Snowpaw's friend queried.

"The usual; collecting herbs and cleaning nests like an apprentice should," Snowpaw replied.

Hazelfoot nodded in return, and her yellow gaze turned towards where some cats crowded around a few piles of herbs. "I like your idea of distributing herbs amongst the clan, whether they're sick or not," she commented.

"Thanks, I thought all clan members should keep up their strength. Eating prey alone isn't enough, so I asked Moonlight if we can make it a routine. Now, whenever we have herbs to spare, we hand them out," Snowpaw explained, "herbs have good nutrients."

"It's good to have cats like you; always with new ideas to improve the clan," Hazelfoot marvelled, her yellow eyes lit up with fierce determination, "I would like to do something like that oneday."

Snowpaw flicked her ears up, surprised by her comment. "Well, thankyou. And you *will*, Hazelfoot. You're a determined and brave cat. I know how much the clan means to you. You've already done

so much – and you're a really fast runner– ". Snowpaw cut off when she noticed Hazelfoot looking peculiarly at her. "Oh, too much?"

Hazelfoot nodded.

"I guess I overthink things sometimes," Snowpaw admitted, cuffing her paws on the ground, and taking another bite of her mouse.

Hazelfoot's whiskers twitched in amusement, and she chuckled. "You're a funny cat, Snowpaw. I'm glad to have you as my friend." She began to eat her vole too, staring up at the group of senior warriors who were discussing the twolegs.

Hazelfoot stretched out a long foreleg, and sighed. "What do you think they're going to do about the twolegs? Do you think Twilightstar will tell Snowclan at the next gathering?" She asked.

Snowpaw swallowed her mouthful, "I guess, but then again Nightclan might look weak."

"Hmm. I suppose so, but what if Snowclan's territory starts being taken too. *That* would cause some trouble," Hazelfoot remarked. Snowpaw nodded.

"Let's hope the twolegs stop. I don't want the forest to disappear," Snowpaw put in. A sudden yowl sounded before they could continue, and heads turned to look to the Greatrock.

Twilightstar was climbing up its surface, his silver-grey body nimble in the moonlight. When he reached the top, his amber eyes flashed out to the clan in the night.

"Let all those old enough to catch their own prey gather here for a clan meeting!" He bellowed hoarsely, and Snowpaw was reminded of Twilightstar's slowly growing age. The clan gathered, curious to hear his decisions. Snowpaw and Hazelfoot left their prey and walked over to gather towards the back of the crowd.

"I have discussed the twoleg issue with some of my warriors and we have come to a decision. We do not know how long the twolegs will keep this up, or if this is only a temporary event. For that reason, we won't do anything, except build up our patrols around that area

_ "

"What! Are we going to stand around waiting for them to destroy our territory!" Snowpaw was surprised by Sparrowfoot's challenge. "We should go and show those twolegs who they're messing with; warriors!" He yowled.

Twilightstar fixed his glowing, amber gaze on the old tabby tom. "We are not standing around doing nothing," he hissed, trying to stay calm, "and if the twolegs don't stop, we *will* show them who they're messing with," he glowered down at Sparrowfoot with flashing eyes, but Sparrowfoot didn't seem the least disturbed.

Fixing his calmer but still authorised gaze out to the crowd, he suddenly hesitated. *What's he got to say now.* Snowpaw wondered.

"If, this twoleg issue is to worsen before the next gathering ... we might have to obtain land from Snowclan," he tried to keep his gaze confident, but Snowpaw could see the uncertainty beneath it. His announcement was followed by clashing yowls of both agreement and protest.

"Whatever will the kits do? I don't want to attract fighting to our clan," Silverleap had joined the gathered cats and was yowling her concern to her sister, Icetail.

"I'll claw out their fur if they dare refuse," Petalclaw hissed to Mudfall, the russet-brown she-cat's bushy tail lashed in the air.

"We'll need a plan." Snowpaw heard the orange tabby, Sunstripe, meow. His eyes glinted and his claws slid out.

Snowpaw looked around at her provoked clan. *But I don't want to fight.*

"Twilightstar wants to speak," Hazelfoot whispered in Snowpaw's ear. Snowpaw looked up to see Twilightstar raising his tail for silence. At last the noise died down.

"We want to obtain their land *formally*," Twilightstar stressed. "We will not fight for their land, we will *ask* politely. If it indeed comes to it, we will fight, but I'm sure Winterstar has enough sense in her

not to let a clan die out."

The clan hushed at this, understanding their leader's logic. *That's more like it.* Snow paw sighed.

"Of course, that is only if the twolegs continue with what they're doing. Twolegs are always doing weird things, I'm sure this is only a temporary hobby of their's; they'll soon be off doing some other crazy project," Twilightstar reassured his clan, his soft white paws glowed gently in the moonlight. "Still, I want the patrols to be extra careful, and no one is to go alone to the northern border as I said earlier. That's all for now, this meeting is dismissed." He waved his tail and slid down the Greatrock, to land neatly at its base. Blackpelt was there to greet him, and Greypounce joined them.

It must be hard being a leader. You always need to make sure you make the right choice for the whole clan. Snowpaw thought, *I'm glad I'm not a leader; I'm happy with the role of a medicine cat, but even that's a lot to think about... like what about the prophecy... I have to make big decisions myself.*

Snowpaw snapped out of her thoughts when Hazelfoot spoke, "come on. Let's go finish our food," she mewed, waving to Snowpaw.

"Okay," Snowpaw mewed, but her thoughts were still focussed on the prophecy. *I still haven't found a link to the cat in the prophecy.*

Chapter 8

Bit of a long chapter. Enjoy :)

It was early dawn; the air was still – almost dead. Nightpaw felt sick and empty, as he looked out into the barren landscape ahead, from the edge of the forest. *Everyone must feel the same.* He thought, looking down the line of cats who had joined the patrol: Hazelfoot, Greypounce, Sunstripe and Specklepaw. All held the same empty, lost look in their eyes.

A few days had passed since Twilightstar's announcement about the twolegs. The twolegs still hadn't stopped, but not much more land had been taken either. Now, quiet, yellow monsters sat in the barren, dark brown field - silent in the chill dawn.

The thunderpath was just visible across the field. *So much land has been taken...* Nightpaw thought. *Our forest once reached that thunderpath.*

"The twolegs aren't here yet and the monsters are asleep," Greypounce murmured to the group, "it may be safe to go out."

A thrush suddenly fluttered into the barren land, settling down in the middle of the space – surrounded by quite monsters. The patrol eyed the thrush in silence; staring with shared anticipation but also fear.

"I'm going," Hazelfoot meowed, slipping out of the ferns.

"Wait," Sunstripe interrupted, placing the tip of his white tipped tail on Hazelfoot's shoulder. He hesitated; his eyes filled with doubt.

Twilightstar told us to be careful, and stay away from the twolegs. But the clan needs food too, Nightpaw pondered.

"...be careful, okay," Sunstripe finally meowed, "we'll follow you

from a little way behind."

Greypounce's green eyes looked mildly annoyed. "Don't forget who's in charge of this patrol; that hasn't changed. But I agree, we'll follow close behind you Hazelfoot," she confirmed.

Hazelfoot nodded, and quickened her pace as she slinked out of the undergrowth and into the open.

Her brown pelt camouflaged well with the dusty brown earth, as she drew closer to the bird, pawstep after pawstep.

Nightpaw followed, along with the others – shadows to Hazelfoot. He hid behind a yellow monster, which loomed over his head. He didn't like hiding next to such an intimidating, large object, but he preferred it over the exposed open.

A sudden low hum set the ground under Nightpaw rumbling. He looked up to the others, who were crouching behind monsters too. They too looked around in alarm. He heard a twoleg yowl somewhere in the distance.

The last thing Nightpaw saw was Hazelfoot, as she leaped at the thrush, before an unforeseen blast and growl from the large monster above Nightpaw sent him launching out of his hiding spot and blindly running into the open. *The monsters are waking!* He screeched in his mind.

He heard Specklepaw let out a yowl of surprise, as more monsters woke up, grumbling, sending vibrations through the ground. *We have to get out of here! Back to the forest!*

But as he looked back to the forest, he saw a yellow monster chugging along, cutting off the path with its large body. *We're trapped!* A twoleg sat on its high seat.

So they only wake when twolegs are around? He wondered.

He was backing up when he suddenly bumped into Hazelfoot. She looked up, a thrush hanging limply from her jaws. The patrol backed up against each other, surrounded by monsters waking all around them. Their yellow hides gleamed as they chugged around

in all directions.

"We must stick together! Whatever happens – don't split up," Greypounce yowled over the noise.

"Where's Sunstripe!" Nightpaw called out, his panic rising when he couldn't see the orange tabby anywhere.

"He's over there!" Hazelfoot yowled, dropping her thrush.

The patrol spun around to see Sunstripe crouching under a sleeping monster, his eyes narrowing as he watched the other rumbling beasts.

Suddenly there was a blast followed by a low grumble from the monster he hid under. Sunstripe's yellow eyes widened in alarm. He sprang up onto his paws about to dash out, when a wide, claw-like scoop at the front of the monster started to rise into the air.

Sunstripe chose to escape that way, dashing out under the claw-like scoop. It must have looked like a good escape path from Sunstripe's angle, but from Nightpaw's stance it looked like the worst.

The scoop soon came crashing down a moment later. Sunstripe let out a shrill yowl still running, and Nightpaw half-closed his eyes in fear of what he might see. At the last moment, Sunstripe managed to dart out from under the claw as it came crashing down onto the earth with a clunk.

Nightpaw heaved a great sigh, and felt the bristling pelts of the others relax a little too. *What are the twolegs trying to do!*

But as he thought the accusation, he heard the twoleg within the monster let out a startled yowl when he saw the orange tabby dart out from under the scoop. *Perhaps they didn't mean to,* Nightpaw considered.

"Sunstripe! This way!" Greypounce yowled over the noise, bringing Nightpaw back to the present.

Sunstripe's eyes flashed when he saw the group, and he swerved round to run in their direction. Suddenly a large monster rumbled

across the space in between them, blocking off Sunstripe again.

It wasn't long until another monster started chugging towards the group itself. Nightpaw's heart fluttered when he spun around to see its looming shape coming closer.

"Run!" He yowled, as the group scattered.

What about sticking together! Nightpaw thought, but he knew that they had no choice.

Suddenly, in between the constantly moving, yellow beasts, Nightpaw saw two twolegs speaking to each other. One of the twoleg's eyes lit up in surprise when he saw the cats. He began yowling something, pointing in their direction. Nightpaw couldn't understand the twoleg speech, but it was obvious that the twoleg didn't want them here.

Nightpaw's heart pounded at the thought of being chased by these bizarre creatures. He began darting around the huge monsters, trying to find the others in the huge mess.

At last Nightpaw saw Hazelfoot, with Specklepaw in the distance holding the thrush. More twolegs had appeared, all of them surrounding Hazelfoot, with their huge paws out in front of them, as they tried to catch Hazelfoot.

But Hazelfoot was quick; she weaved in and out of their legs with her fast, long limbs. Darting this way and that, she managed to constantly escape their paws, but she was surrounded and couldn't find a way out. As Nightpaw ran towards her, he could hear her pant with the effort of each dodge. Specklepaw was running towards her too, trying to stick to Greypounce's command of 'must stick together'.

A shrill yowl suddenly split the air, startling Nightpaw. He gaped in a silent wail when he saw a twoleg grab a hold of Hazelfoot. "We're coming! Hang in there, Hazelfoot!" Nightpaw yowled, running faster. Specklepaw was drawing closer too.

The twoleg picked Hazelfoot up, as she frantically tried to claw her

way out of its grasp. Specklepaw put on a spurt, using his long limbs to propel himself forwards, but Greypounce suddenly appeared from around a yellow beast, closer to Hazelfoot than any of them. She leaped up at the twoleg who held Hazelfoot and nipped him on the arm.

The twoleg let out a yowl of alarm and dropped Hazelfoot to the floor. Greypounce then guided a stunned Hazelfoot between the twoleg's feet and towards Specklepaw and Nightpaw.

"Where's Sunstripe again?" She queried when they had gathered in a rush.

"He's somewhere that way," Specklepaw told his mother, dropping the thrush and flicking his ears to indicate the direction.

"Take Hazelfoot and head to the forest. I'll be back with Sunstripe soon," she commanded.

Hazelfoot looked like she was about to protest, but Greypounce was already running off.

"Let's go," Nightpaw meowed, and started running.

"I picked up the thrush you left behind when the monster was coming towards us," Specklepaw meowed to Hazelfoot, but she was still staring blankly after Greypounce. "We better hurry," he meowed.

He picked up the thrush and began running, glancing back to see if Hazelfoot was following. She spun around to look at Specklepaw, as if she had just snapped out of her stunned state and began running too.

The three cats rushed together towards the border of the forest.

Just as they were about to enter the foliage, there was a huge crunch followed by a piercing creak, further along the edge of the forest. The three of them skidded to a halt and watched in stunned silence, as a huge monster shoved its scoop into a tree. The tree gave in with a groan and toppled over to the ground in a flurry of leaves. *No...*

A 'clunk' from a monster nearby jolted them awake and they quickly scrambled into the forest, their pelts ruffled and their hearts racing. They didn't stop until they were a few fox-lengths into the foliage.

"The twolegs! They're taking more forest!" Hazelfoot exclaimed, once they were safe.

"I don't know what to do. We're helpless against them! Do you think we'll have to take land from Snowclan?" Nightpaw meowed anxiously. He liked patrolling borders and practicing battle skills, but he didn't want the clans to go into war over land.

"Well, that's not up to you to decide; that's Twilightstar's job," Hazelfoot puffed, catching her breath.

She was crouching low to the ground, her eyes flickering over the top of the undergrowth. Specklepaw settled down and scraped some dirt over the thrush.

Nightpaw could hear Hazelfoot's claws scrape stone, as they anxiously awaited the arrival of their two other clanmates. She was usually a calm cat, but now she was unsettled and anxious.

Moments later, the cats pricked their ears at the sound of swishing ferns. Two fern stalks parted and Sunstripe appeared. He was panting heavily and his eyes darted across the group.

"Where's Greypounce?" He asked, his voice raising in concern when he didn't see the flecked grey cat.

"She went looking for you," Specklepaw answered. Sunstripe's eyes lit up in sudden panic, which instantly spread to the rest of the patrol.

Oh no, where could she be now?

Chapter 9

"Watermint. Where could the watermint be?" Snowpaw meowed aloud, as she wondered through the shade of the forest. It was cooler that day, a cold breeze was picking up as the sun rose a little way above the horizon. The sky held a few dark clouds in its vast expanse.

Snowpaw found the cluster of watermint beside an oak tree and began nipping a few stalks. When she was done, she placed it in a neat pile beside the rest of the herbs she had already gathered.

Days had passed since Twilightstar's announcement of the twolegs, and although she was concerned, her main priority remained with the prophecy. Two days ago, she had visited Twigstep again to query about the Cats of the Meodow. *Whisperleaf, Longscar, Notail, Applefeather, Swiftleap, Mudfall, Petalclaw...*

She repeated mentally. After hearing from Twigstep several times over about some ancient cat groups, their names were now being committed to memory. Some cats from the Cats of the Meadow appeared to hold a wisp of the prophecy, as if those cats had crossed paths with the cats associated with the prophecy. But none felt truly connected. *Odd.* Was all Snowpaw could think, she felt like she was drawing closer, but passing the answer each time. *I need to take a bigger leap. I need to find answers and* now.

She wasn't far from the Snowclan border, as she collected the watermint, when she heard a faint crunch. She turned her gaze to the border, and saw something flicker within the green-leaf undergrowth. Bounding up to the river, which marked the border, she gazed out into the pine forest curiously. Then she saw it: a dark blue-grey cat with the faintest tabby markings.

His back was towards her, and he didn't seem to notice her – or at least acknowledge it. *He's the cat from the gathering.* Snowpaw still

had the sensation that she should talk to him; that somehow he was related to the prophecy.

"Hey, you!" Snowpaw called out. Nothing. "I need to talk to you!"

Any cat could have easily heard her; he wasn't very far. In fact, Snowpaw could walk right up to him if the border hadn't been at her paws.

But the thought didn't leave her mind. She looked down at the stream: it was small here, and could be crossed in a single leap. Making it over with a simple pounce, she landed onto the other side with ease.

Pacing forwards a few steps into Snowclan territory, she called out again. "Hey! I need to talk to you!" *This should get his attention; I'm trespassing into his territory.* Snowpaw thought gleefully. *And medicine cats are allowed to cross borders because they share no quarrel with anyone, so he can't challenge me.* Her thought was triumphantly good, but then a sliver of doubt came into her mind. *Perhaps I shouldn't be using that rule so carelessly; it's like I don't appreciate what it means.*

The cat looked up at her when she called, his eyes were calm and dark blue, but turned around to slither away.

Rude. Snowpaw thought, *at least I got to see his face this time.* He was a lithe looking cat with grey whiskers. *But he looks so healthy and lithe, how could he have greying whiskers?*

Realizing that she should get off Snowclan territory before a patrol comes along, Snowpaw stepped back and retraced her pawsteps back across the river into Nightclan territory.

Glancing towards her pile of herbs, she thought back to the newest pieces of information that she had collected regarding the prophecy. *Twigstep told me that my parents lived separate from any of the groups. Just the two of them along with Whitepelt and Moonlight.* It had been interesting but not helpful in figuring out the prophecy. *Moonlight is Greypounce's and Twilightstar's sister.* She recalled.

I've also been to the Moon Cave several times these past moons. Mainly to meet more Starclan residents.

A sudden thought reached her mind. *Perhaps I should go to the Moon Cave now. The Starclan cats did say that I could come and visit anytime. This time I'll bring questions.*

Her paws itched and she stared thoughtfully at the herbs, a plan forming in her mind. *If I can collect enough herbs – more than I need – Moonlight might think that I've been collecting herbs all this time. Of course, I'll have to be quick in collecting the extra herbs, so it* doesn't *take all that time.*

Picking up the herbs hastily, Snowpaw scuttled away to a part of the forest that was home to a variety of herbs growing in one spot. Snowpaw quickly but neatly nipped several of each type, making sure it looked as if she had taken her time to do it. Leaving her growing bundle of herbs behind, she hurtled away briefly, searching the forest for some more herbs to add. A freshly growing bundle of borage caught her attention with its small, blue, star-shaped flowers. *Well, this is going well. I don't think I've ever collected so many herbs at once in my life!*

When she returned to the other bundles of herbs with her borage, she realized it was a lot to carry. *Now what?*

She was going to have to take them back to the camp, but then Moonlight would notice her, and give her more chores to do. *What would be the point of all this rushing then? No, I'll take them to the Moon Cave with me.* She decided.

Picking up most of the herbs in her jaw, Snowpaw decided that she would leave the rest here and collect them on the way back. That way, she could explain to Moonlight why she was so late *afterwards*. *Yes, that will work.* She gave an approving nod, and walked off. *Now, I must be off to the Moon Cave.*

The cave dripped with water, its sound echoed eerily around the walls. Snowpaw stood at its entrance with her bundle of herbs, a little puffed from her climb up the tumble of rocks. *I'm here. I can't believe I'm actually doing this! Going to the Moon Cave by myself!* She

gave an inward squeal of excitement, and her fur was ruffled with delight.

She found a good spot beside the pool of water and placed her clump of herbs beside her. Settling down, she touched her nose to the ice cold water. Her eyes closed and sleep washed over her instantly. When she felt hard ground hit her paws, she opened them, to find herself in a sunlit forest. Light green leaves rustled in a cool breeze. Butterflies and even bees buzzed from flower to flower. Snowpaw gazed around inquisitively, searching for a Starclan cat.

There was a rustle of leaves in the undergrowth just ahead, and a white fluffy she-cat appeared to greet her, followed by a lithe black cat. Instantly, Snowpaw recognized Blackfern, the black she-cat with fiery, green eyes, who was her grandmother and Echo's mate. She waved at Blackfern with her tail, her spirits lifting higher.

"Hi Snowpaw," Blackfern purred, settling beside the white she-cat. Snowpaw didn't recognise the white she-cat, but she had friendly midnight blue eyes, which sparkled with star shine.

"This is Snow Goose," Blackfern introduced the white cat.

"Hi," Snow Goose mewed warmly.

"Hi, I'm Snowpaw," Snowpaw responded, although she guessed that the she-cat already knew. If she did, she showed no sign of it.

"What have you come for today?" Blackfern asked, her green eyes inquisitive. She was a clever, quick-witted cat.

"I've come to find out more about the prophecy," Snowpaw explained.

"I thought so, that's exactly why we're here," Blackfern meowed.

Snowpaw shifted her gaze to the white, fluffy she-cat, intrigued by her presence. *How much do they know?*

"Tell her, Snow Goose," Blackfern mewed softly, her steady, green eyes didn't leave Snowpaw for a moment, but Snowpaw felt

comfortable beneath their sharp green gaze; she felt close to Blackfern.

Now Snowpaw was really curious, shifting her undivided attention to the dark blue-eyed, snowy cat. The she-cat's night-blue eyes turned distant and appeared to hold frost-like star shine in them. When she spoke, her voice was wise and silky, as if a spirit were speaking through her.

"Follow the thin thread of wonder and moonlight," she voiced.

Snowpaw's eyes widened in surprise and curiosity. When Snow Goose's gaze returned to herself after her spirit-filled words, Blackfern spoke.

"This 'mini-prophecy' will help you along your path of discovering the true meaning behind the prophecy that has been entrusted to you," she explained.

Snowpaw nodded, reassured. *I'm getting closer – although I still have quite a way to go.*

The two cats waited as if expecting another question from her mind. Snowpaw thought hastily. "The cat, from Snowclan – the blue-grey tabby. Do you know him? Is he part of the prophecy?"

"Yes, we know him, and I believe so. Of course, you would be better off asking someone who knows him better," Blackfern replied. Snow Goose nodded in agreement.

"Do you know of anyone who does?" Snowpaw queried hopefully.

Blackfern looked thoughtful, "no one's better to ask than the cat himself."

"But a brother of your's has met a cat at the gatherings who does know him well," Snow Goose put in.

Snowpaw's eyes flashed thoughtfully at this. *Which one of my brothers? And did you say someone at the gathering?*

"I think you should go now," Blackfern suddenly mewed, "don't

forget the mini-prophecy that you were given: *follow the thin thread of wonder and moonlight...*" Blackfern's voice softly echoed as everything around Snowpaw began to fade, turning to mist in a night-sky environment.

Snowpaw gasped when she woke, staring at the reflection of herself in the cool pool water. She was suddenly aware of a presence hovering beside her. Her pelt pricked, and she spun round to gaze up at the scowling face that greeted her.

"Sorry?" Snowpaw squeaked uncertainly.

Chapter 10

Panic-stricken, yellow eyes swept across the group, as Sunstripe grasped the full meaning of Specklepaw's words. "So, you mean she's *out there*?" He flicked his tail in the direction of the barren landscape.

Ruffled fur and bright eyes of comprehension met his query. "Well, I guess," Specklepaw meowed with concern, his blue eyes round.

The orange tabby sighed, he looked exhausted and he was still panting from his escape. "Okay, let's go and find her," he meowed, indicating with his tail to follow.

Leaving the thrush safely hidden, the cats jogged through the foliage to the edge of the barren land once more. Nightpaw cast his gaze out, searching for his mother. *Where could she be?*

"There!" Hazelfoot shouted, just as Nightpaw's eyes caught the grey spotted pelt at the far end of the empty land, near the thunderpath.

"She's too far away to hear us," Specklepaw observed, before anyone could vainly call out.

"I'll get her, stay here," Sunstripe ordered.

Specklepaw's blue eyes sparked urgently. "I'm faster, I'll be able to reach her sooner," he reminded Sunstripe. He didn't mention Sunstripe exhausted look.

The orange tabby warrior only had to glance at Specklepaw before showing his approval. "Okay."

They began running. *But how far will Sunstripe run.* But as Nightpaw watched he saw Sunstripe gain renewed energy and speed in his determination to save his clanmate. Specklepaw scurried beside him, his legs moving swiftly with practiced ease over the ground.

Suddenly there was a screech of surprise, and everyone looked up to see Greypounce in the distance. Nightpaw watched, in what felt like slow-motion, as Greypounce struck her soft, grey paw on a stone. She yowled, mostly out of surprise, as she fell. Now she was on the floor, her paw limp, and a monster drawing in towards her. *Oh no! Hurry!* Nightpaw gaped in fear.

Specklepaw put on a spurt, hurtling forwards with his belly close to the ground and his tail streaming out, leaving Sunstripe behind. *They're not going to make it in time!* They were still far off, even with Specklepaw hurtling towards the grey cat.

Greypounce was now crouching down on all fours – more like three paws – wide eyed and frozen in fear. The monster chugged towards her, drawing closer and closer, like an owl closing in on its prey. *But we're not prey!* Nightpaw thought in alarm. Nightpaw's heart thudded; Specklepaw was still fox-lengths away, with Sunstripe still slowly gaining ground.

A flash of grey distracted Nightpaw, and a cat appeared beside Greypounce. It grabbed her by the scruff and tried to drag her out of the away. Greypounce managed to give the cat a boost with a flick of her legs, and the two were soon safely out of the monster's track.

Nigthpaw couldn't believe their luck. He watched as the grey cat urgently mewed to Greypounce, trying nudge her into a sprint. Finally successful, the two cats turned to race towards the approaching Sunstripe and Specklepaw, who in return spun around to race back to the forest ahead of them.

It was at that moment that Nightpaw noticed a light orange collar dangling around the grey cat's neck. *Is he a kittypet?* Nightpaw wondered in surprise.

A bell dangled on his collar, Nightpaw could imagine its clear, ringing sound, as the kittypet approached from the distance.

As the cats drew closer, the kittypet's tabby markings came into view, revealing himself to be a grey tabby with slightly, fluffy fur.

The patrol came hurtling towards Nightpaw and Hazelfoot, with no sign of slowing down. "Quick! They're coming this way!" Nightpaw shouted, dashing off into the forest with Hazelfoot just behind him, to avoid being crushed by the others.

The group came to a halt a few paces inside the forest, with everyone panting. "Is everyone alright?" It was the first time Nightpaw heard the kittypet talk; he had a deep but gentle voice.

"Yeah," Greypounce panted, "I think so." When she caught her breath, she stared at the grey tom. "Thankyou, for saving my life," she meowed.

Sunstripe stared at the kittypet too, but his whiskers quivered as if he was thinking hard.

"You're Dawnrise's and Owlmist's brother, aren't you?"

The cat dipped his head. "Yes, that's right. I once lived in the forest, but I left to become a kittypet, so I could learn about twolegs. I left just after the Great battle." He paused, and glanced at the two apprentices and Hazelfoot, "I'm Twilight by the way," he meowed warmly.

"It's an honour to see you again, Twilight. Let alone be saved by you," Greypounce meowed.

"No need for formal words, I'm merely a kittypet," Twilight mewed.

"That may be true, but you were once part of the wild too. You will always be welcomed by the clans," Greypounce promised.

Twilight's eyes flashed with doubt. "Is that true? The clans have rejected the life of a kittypet since I left the forest, and they have grown apart from their old ways. I don't think they'll welcome kittypets as easily anymore."

"We don't have to worry about that: you're not going to join the clans – wait, are you?" Sunstripe looked at him, his yellow eyes questioning.

"No," Twilight answered, amused, his tail wavering, "at least, not at

the moment. How are Dawnrise and Owlmist by the way?"

"Dawnrise is doing fine. She has two newly born kits. Their names are Skykit and Mudkit," Greypounce's green eyes glowed warmly, "as for Owlmist, I'm not sure. She's in Snowclan, so we don't see her much," she explained.

Nightpaw straightened up suddenly, realising he could answer Twilight's query. "Snowpaw told me that she saw her at the half-moon medicine cat gathering. From what I heard, it sounds like she's doing fine," Nightpaw meowed.

"I'm glad to hear that. I'm curious to know who the sire of Dawnrise's kits are?" Twilight turned to face the two eldest warriors again.

Greypounce suddenly looked uncertain, Sunstripe stepped in to answer.

"We're not sure, she hasn't told us – not directly anyway. From what I've heard, he might be a dark coloured loner from outside the clans," he meowed.

"I might have seen him before," Twilight mused, "he has long thick fur, and a dusty brown pelt with a dark brown mask across his face and paws."

"Perhaps it's him," Sunstripe commented.

"I'd better let your patrol continue then; you probably have lots to do," Twilight mewed, turning around to leave.

"Do you know what the twolegs are doing?" Specklepaw suddenly asked.

Twilight glanced back at Specklepaw, then spun round to sit down again with his tail neatly wrapped around his paws.

"Those big yellow things that the twolegs are driving around in are called trucks or diggers. The twolegs are building something for sure; can't say what it is for sure though."

"Do you know how much forest they'll take?" Greypounce asked next.

"No, it really depends on what they are building. Although usually they do take quite a lot of space." When he saw the scared looks on the patrol's faces, he added, "but that may not be the case – perhaps this is all the room they need," he meowed hastily.

When no one asked anymore questions, he meowed, "I'll leave you to it now. Say 'hi' to Dawnrise for me and Owlmist if you can, and if you ever need me, just come and find me in twolegplace; I'll be around," he called over his shoulder as he left.

"We will," Greypounce called after him, waving her tail.

Well, that's very broad. Twolegplace is huge!

"I think we'd better go and report to Twilightstar immediately about the twoleg activity," Hazelfoot meowed once Twilight left, "then we'll see what happens at the next gathering."

"Right you are," Greypounce meowed, swishing her tail to the others, her paw was looking better already. Specklepaw unburied the thrush and picked it up before following the others.

As they galloped through the forest in silence, Hazelfoot's words echoed eerily in Nightpaw's mind. *Then we'll see what happens at the next gathering.* He had a seizing feeling that this would not go well.

Chapter 11

Snowpaw looked up at the broad grey head that frowned down on her. The cat's eyes flicked to the herb pile beside Snowpaw and back to her.

"What's this?" the grey she-cat questioned sharply.

Snowpaw stood up to face Moonlight, surprised that she had come looking for her so soon. *This wasn't what I planned! How long did it take her to know I was up here?*

"You were meant to take the herbs *back* to camp so that I could treat the clan. *Here*, they are of no use," her mentor meowed sternly.

Snowpaw found that she couldn't answer.

"What are you doing here anyway?" Moonlight question, her eyes accusing.

Snowpaw's eyes flickered away from her mentor's challenging gaze, she hestitated, "I-I thought I would speak with Starclan – they did say I could visit anytime."

"But why *now*? And you could have at least told me," Moonlight scolded.

Snowpaw looked away, lost for words. "No reason, I won't do it again."

There's no need, I have what I came for.

Silence hung between the two like a silky spider's web.

"Something's wrong isn't it?" Moonlight's soft voice spoke.

Her grey fur was once again soft and it ruffled in a soft breeze,

unlike the bristling, angry fur it was before. Snowpaw met her gaze.

"You can tell me everything Snowpaw, I'm sorry, I should have listened first."

Snowpaw thought about her response carefully. *I don't want to give away my prophecy – at least not yet, but Moonlight deserves to know something's up.*

"It's nothing that I can't handle... but I'll let you know if anything changes," Snowpaw mewed.

Moonlight nodded, "I understand."

"You do?"

"Yes, this prophecy is for you. But the clan needs to be protected and if that means you have to let me help you with the prophecy, then you must let me help," Moonlight meowed, yellow eyes gazing into Snowpaw's own blue eyes, ensuring that she understood.

"How did you know about the prophecy?" Snowpaw asked, completely dumbfounded. "And while you're at it, you may as well tell me how you even knew I was here?"

Moonlight purred. "Sometimes a medicine cat just knows. Besides, what medicine cat would want to slip away to go hunting when there's a world filled with stars up here to explore?"

Snowpaw tilted her head to the side in thought; perhaps her plan wasn't so sneaky after all.

Moonlight flicked her light-grey tipped tail. "Let's take these herbs back to the camp, so we can sort them out."

"Um..." Snowpaw hesitated, "there's more."

"I know." Moonlight answered around her already full mouth of herbs.

The two cats walked to the entrance of the Moon Cave, each carrying bundles of herbs in their mouth. They scrambled down the

rocky fall and padded across the open stretch of grass that separated the mountain from the forest's edge.

As Snowpaw walked across the field, she couldn't help but think about her vision of the spiked-collared creatures attacking her clanmates and the other cats. She looked up; this is where it had happened.

The two cats walked past a tree that stood in the field alone. It's twisted branches were complemented with light green leaves, which shivered in the breeze. A weird sensation fell over Snowpaw as she gazed at it, and she shivered.

"Are you okay?" Moonlight mewed through her herbs.

Snowpaw nodded, glancing back at the meadow and the tree one last time as they entered the forest.

The thick undergrowth of the forest instantly swept Snowpaw's worries away; she was home. After collecting the rest of the herb piles – which Moonlight was evidently impressed with – they headed back to camp.

They trekked through the forest until they entered a clearing in time to watch Mudfall and the border patrol encounter each other.

The border patrol halted in a flurry of pelts. Snowpaw noticed her brothers, Nightpaw and Specklepaw, amongst them. Mudfall, however, entered the clearing in a distant, grim state.

Nightpaw rushed out from the group to stand in front of Mudfall.

"Don't take your hunting patrol to the northern border! The monsters are awake! It's even more dangerous than before!" He yelped, his green eyes wide.

"It's too late," Mudfall mewed gravely, his eyes travelling across the patrol. "I've taken my hunting patrol to the northern border already, but towards the west side..." he paused, hestitating, "a cat was hit by a monster."

The border patrol froze. Snowpaw's eyes grew round and she felt

Moonlight stiffen beside her. Mudfall turned his dull gaze towards the two medicine cats for the first time since they entered, the border patrol's eyes followed.

"I've come to find you two actually," he mewed solemnly.

Snowpaw's heart was racing; this didn't sound like some cat was injured – it sounded as if they were on their way to starclan already!

Snowpaw leaped forward, dropping the bundles in her mouth, and bolted between Mudfall and the patrol, leaving the clearing. *But who is it?* The question burned inside her, as she raced to the camp. Her mind whirled with fear and she ran through names in her mind.

It's not Moonlight, or Mudfall, or Specklepaw, Nightpaw, Greypounce, Hazelfoot and Sunstripe because they're back in the clearing. She leaped a log. *Blackpelt was back at camp organising patrols, it can't be him – can it?* She swerved around a sapling and pressed on.

What about the leader? The thought entered her mind. *No, he has four lives left. If he had lost a life, Mudfall would have been much more urgent because Twilightstar could still live.* But something inside Snowpaw made her wish it was Twilightstar, though she was guilty at the thought. *Because if it had been Twilightstar then no cat would die; he would live and so would everyone else!* But the truth stood strong, its teeth didn't back down: a cat has died and it's not just Twilightstar losing another life.

A small branch almost tripped Snowpaw over, her paws were fumbling from fear. She didn't like the fact that she might not be able to save this cat. She had become a medicine cat not because she didn't like to fight, but because of the extra knowledge she would gain. She loved helping others, and what better than to learn how to battle and heal? The knowledge of herbs and starclan also intrigued her and she felt like she was meant to be a medicine cat.

But now I can't use any of that!

The trees that marked the camp entrance came into view, she sprinted onwards, but in her heart she suddenly shrank back, afraid

of what and who she might see lying on the floor of a sombre camp.

She ran down the small ravine and into the camp. A bundle of ruffled, brown fur in the middle of the camp met her sight. Her heart raced, and she hurried to its side.

I hope it's getting exciting XD I just thought I would describe the clan's territory briefly. To the north (where the territory is being taken) is the thunderpath, and beyond that is Twolegplace. To the west is a long fence that marks more Twoleg houses, to the South is the mountain, and lastly, to the east is Snowclan.

Chapter 12

"No, no, no!" Snowpaw cried, drinking in Twigstep's familiar smell.

Snowpaw's eyes teared up, as the memories of the brown she-cat flooded her mind: always comforting her, sharing great stories and teaching her about the ancient cat groups. Twigstep was an elder that the whole clan loved. Now she was gone, and Snowpaw felt like she was in the middle of a very dark clearing, left to fend for herself and solve the prophecy herself. She had no way of finding out about the ancient cat groups now, but worst of all she had lost a dear friend.

The clan gathered around the edge of the camp. With their heads bowed and their pelts dim, they stood like stones, sending their respectful thoughts to Twigstep's spirit.

Pawsteps sounded and Snowpaw looked up to see Sparrowfoot, Twigstep's mate, walking up. He placed a delicate purple flower down on Twigstep's flank. Twigstep's curled up body looked as if she was sleeping ... only that she would never wake.

Sparrowfoot's eyes were pools of water and the brown tabby was shaking with sorrow.

"And to think that I never got to be an elder alongside her," he murmured. "She had asked me so many times become an elder. I thought I was doing good remaining as a warrior: bringing her food and protecting our borders, but now I realise all she wanted was to have me by her side."

Sparrowfoot blinked his water-filled eyes and bent down to lick his mate's ear. "I would join you now, if only you were still here," he murmured.

Snowpaw thought her blue eyes couldn't grow any larger with sadness as she looked at Sparrowfoot.

A rush of pawsteps announced the patrols' and Moonlight's arrival. A brown blur of fur rushed out from them and ran to Twigstep's side, settling down to sink their nose deep into Twigstep's fur.

"Oh, no Twigstep. Not you," Hazelfoot cried.

The rest of the patrol froze, gazing at Twigstep with grief-stricken eyes. Sunstripe hurriedly parted from the group to speak with Twilightstar, who was grimly sitting in the shade of the Greatrock. Moonlight and Greypounce also mournfully padded away from the group, their jaws full of herbs, as they headed to the medicine cat den.

Soft pawsteps sounded behind Snowpaw. She looked around to see Quickfoot walking up beside her, his solemn eyes settled on Twigstep. He bent his head to lick Twigstep's shoulder. A moment later, the rest of the clan came up to Twigstep, bending their heads to lick her fur and murmur a word into her ear.

"How did this happen?" Snowpaw queried, looking at Quickfoot, who remained by the elder's side. *An elder should have been safe and sound in the camp.*

Quickfoot closed his eyes briefly as if reliving the terrible events in his mind before opening them to gaze at Snowpaw.

"I was in the hunting patrol that saw her," he managed to say. "We were heading towards the northern border to hunt. When we got there we saw Twigstep stalking down a mouse in the barren landscape surround by sleeping monsters –"

"Mouse-brained mouse," Sparrowfoot muttered bitterly, interrupting Quickfoot, and making Snowpaw jump, "shouldn't have been there in the first place, surrounded by all those monsters."

Quickfoot continued, after casting Sparrowfoot a sorrowful look. "She was stalking closer and closer... suddenly, she leaped, at that moment a monster – not the yellow ones, just the usual thunderpath monster – appeared. It knocked her out of the sky and sent her flying to the ground. It happened so fast; none of us even had time to know what was happening. We ran out to make sure she was

alright, but when we got there we knew it was too late..." he mewed, his voice shaking. "We carried her back before the twolegs could take her," he whispered.

Snowpaw looked back at Twigstep feeling shallower than ever. *How did we let this happen to an elder?* Sparrowfoot's tempered voice shook her from her thoughts.

"Twolegs," he spat, "so they think they can steal our territory, and kill our cats? Think again, I'll claw the ears of the next twoleg who so *touches* a cat," he raged, then added miserably, "if I had been an elder, then maybe she would have never gone. She would still be right here...with me," his voice grew tenser, "instead she was out hunting when she didn't need to, because she had no one to keep her company."

Snowpaw heard Hazelfoot sniff. "We should have all been here for her," she croaked, not lifting her head up from Twigstep's fur.

"Hazelfoot right, don't blame yourself, Sparrowfoot," Snowpaw mewed, feeling guilty herself that she hadn't been here either. "And think about why you stayed a warrior: so that you could hunt for her and defend her, and you did that."

Sparrowfoot glance at her. "You think so?" He questioned quietly.

"Yes, I know so," Snowpaw mewed.

Sparrowfoot stared at her as if trying to believe her, then nodded solemnly, and rested his head on Twigstep, looking a little reassured.

Snowpaw thought she heard a small whisper thanking her, and she caught a whiff of Twigstep's scent floating in the wind.

"She loved you for that."

Chapter 13

Snowpaw stirred beside Twigstep's stone cold body. She had stayed beside the elder's corpse all evening and now the sun was setting, cloaking the camp in a red light. She stood up slowly, aware of her stiff joints and legs after laying beside Twigstep's body.

Hazelfoot and Sparrowfoot were still curled up beside Twigstep, as if hoping that their warmth will wake her from her deep sleep.

Looking around the camp with grief-filled eyes, Snowpaw noticed that the camp was empty. Only the figure of Icetail, who stood guard at the camp entrance like an ice statue, was there. Snowpaw padded over.

"I'm going out for a walk," Snowpaw mewed solemnly, without looking up.

"I understand," Icetail sympathised.

Padding past her, Snowpaw made her way up the short but steep slope of boulders and through the bushes at the top. She looked back at the camp, surrounded by its protective brambles.

The camp receded from her sight, and the surroundings grew dark. Snowpaw stopped in the middle of a clearing and glanced up a tree. Being a good climber and an exceptional leaper, she was tempted by it height and thick branches. *I just need to be away from everything for a bit.*

Taking a massive leap she jumped as high as she could up the trunk of the tree, and climbed the rest until she reached a branch. Standing on the branch she leaped again onto another branch, then again, and again, and again, until she was high enough to see the clans' territories.

The night sky opened up around her as she edged a little further

along the branch, looking out across Snowclan's wind-swept land.

There's their camp! Snowpaw thought happily. The grief that had clung to her now lifted off like mist from her fur.

Twigstep lives with Starclan now. I will visit her in my dreams... Snowpaw reminded herself. *Hazelfoot and Sparrowfoot will need help getting through their grief, and I will be here for them, Twigstep.*

Focussing on Snowclan territory, Snowpaw took in the landscape. The northern part of the territory was pine forest, which stretched along the western border, which they shared with Nightclan. The rest of the land was meadow, with rocky outcrops jutting out like rocks in a river. Snowclan's camp was a rocky outcrop itself; it was centred towards the middle of the meadow territory. Snowpaw also noticed the long rocky ravine which stretched from the west side towards the east side of Snowclan territory. A rocky crack that opened up to the sky.

Thinking about Snowclan reminded Snowpaw about her and her brothers' names. *Blackpelt named me Snowkit in honour of Snowclan, while Nightkit was named in honour of our clan, Nightclan. As for Specklepaw, he was named after our mother, because of the way both their pelts are speckled.*

Whether it was because she was named after Snowclan or because she was a medicine cat, Snowpaw felt drawn in by Snowclan. *Not in the way that I would abandon Nightclan, but in a way that I would like to explore it and learn more.* Snowpaw thought for a moment. *I'm sure the prophecy starts there: in Snowclan territory.*

The moon had risen by now, its silver threads of light falling in between the trees and enveloping the forest with its silver cloak. As Snowpaw descended from branch to branch something caught her eye. She paused, balancing, on a thick branch and crept forward. A small breeze gently stirred the leaves and undergrowth below – there it was: another flash of silver that stretched between two trees.

As she moved the silver flash moved along the line between the two trees. Snowpaw's eyes grew wide and she quickly descended and

scampered over to the trees. It had disappeared again. The moonlight couldn't catch it anymore. But as she waited, the wind shifted and the moon's beams caught the silky thread again, turning it silver. *It's a spider's web!* But no ordinary web... it was a single thread, instead of the usual network of threads.

The silver light suddenly travelled further, passing the tree and continuing onto another thread that stretched between two other trees. Looking carefully through the forest, Snowpaw noticed gleams of silver throughout: the single thread continued through the forest, as if leading somewhere... *This is beautiful. How much work did this spider do? And what for?*

Then a thought flickered through her mind. *Follow the thin thread of wonder and moonlight.*

Snowpaw leaped forward, obeying the prophecy, and followed the thread as it wove between trees. It felt as if a starry ancestor was zipping along side her: a silver light beside a clan cat.

A sudden strong scent brought Snowpaw to a skidding halt. The forest opened up at that moment to a stream and a moonlit meadow beyond. *Snowlcan territory.*

The silver thread continued, stretching carelessly over the stream and into Snowclan territory, where it had to stretch out further between the more spaced out trees. Snowpaw was puffing as she gaped at the territory, feeling betrayed. *The silver thread should stay within the borders! What am I supposed to do now? I can't travel* that *far into their territory.*

Snowpaw waited, but nothing changed: the wind kept blowing, gently swaying the silver thread in its wake, and the moonlight kept sweeping the meadow with its silver. Everything felt like it was taunting her. Its perfection oblivious to the border rules that were broken by the thread.

Perhaps it's a sign. Perhaps I should cross too. But Snowpaw was unsure that it was a good idea.

Despite her uncertainty, she listened for patrols. Her ears swivelled

each way listening for movement and her eyes searched the land ahead. *No one's here!*

She leaped across the stream despite her silent shriek inside, and crept along the grass, in between its stems, following the thread of wonder and moonlight.

She thought of sticking to the shadows beneath the trees but her pelt was much too white; she was better off sticking to the moonlit grass and hiding behind small rocky outcrops.

Where is this thread taking me? Snowpaw wondered, beginning to worry as the border disappeared behind her. The silk was taking her closer to the mountains, their sheer size loomed over the meadow.

Suddenly her ears pricked. A stone clattered somewhere on her other side, and she heard voices whispering.

Oh great Starclan!

Snowpaw's mind whirled with consequences of her curious trek into Snowclan territory. She spotted a nearby ledge.

She leaped for it, curling into its fortunate curve. All was silent except for her breathing. After a few moments, she heard paw steps above and someone spoke.

"Okay Birdpaw, what can you hear?" A she-cat's voice asked.

Snowpaw recognised Breezefur's voice. *She must have gotten an apprentice recently.*

There was an uncertain scuffle of paws then silence.

"Nothing but the wind and bugs," a young tom replied.

"And what can you smell?" A deep voice added.

There was the sound of sniffing, and Snowpaw felt herself stiffen. *They're right above my head!* Then she remembered to stay calm in order to keep her fear scent at bay.

"The cool night air," the apprentice answered, but stopped as if a little confused.

"Very good," the second warrior praised, "let's head back to the camp now. We've done a good night patrol."

"Pfft, I can't believe Snowclan cats are doing this, I thought only Nightclan patrolled at night," Breezefur huffed.

Snowpaw heard the two warriors' paw steps recede back the way they came, but there was an eerie silence and Snowpaw felt as if one cat still remained, perhaps scanning the landscape still.

"Birdpaw? Are you coming?" Breezefur called from a little distant.

There was a pause.

"Okay," Birdpaw replied.

He waited a moment before rushing off in the direction of the older warriors.

Snowpaw let out a breath, "phew, I can't believe that apprentice can patrol better than those warriors."

She clambered out of the curve and back towards the trees she was following. After her close capture, she was now constantly glancing to her side and behind her as she stalked after the silver web.

At last the silver thread finished in a ribbon that wavered in the wind from the tree it was attached to. Following the direction of its flickering end, Snowpaw realised she was at the bottom of the mountains. A shiver ran through her as she saw the dark cave it pointed to. *Follow cave's foot... is this what it meant? Follow the path to the foot of the mountain?*

Regardless, she knew she had to enter the cave.

She felt like a small mouse about to be prey entering the cave. Her small paws quavered and her ears twitched for any warning. The cave's darkness seemed to echo out towards her, but after a few paw steps the back wall could be made out in the moonlight.

Snowpaw walked up to the wall and stopped, looking confused. Snowpaw crouched down and started looking for cracks or perhaps a hidden tunnel.

Suddenly a shadow loomed over her, its feline shape silhouetting against the back wall.

Snowpaw whipped around, thinking she had been caught for sure. Outlined by the moonlight at the entrance was a large cat with broad shoulders and a slowly wavering tail. Snowpaw froze.

The cat stepped forward with hefty paws, revealing himself to be a dark brown tabby tom. There was something odd about him; the way his fur sparkled.

"Wh-who are you?" Snowpaw managed to mew, shrinking back. *I've never seen him before.*

"You're not from around here, are you?" He questioned in a deep voice, with an edge to it.

How doesn't he know? Snowpaw wondered, then gave the air a sniff. *He does smell of Snowclan, faintly.*

"What are you doing here, skulking around on Snowclan territory?" He growled not moving his eyes from her.

Confused and scared, Snowpaw crouched against the cave wall, but a surge of anger hit her. *I'm not a kit anymore! I can defend myself. Besides, I came here for a reason.*

Snowpaw stood up and stepped forward looking into the starry cat's eyes. He showed no reaction, except for the slightest hint of surprise in his eyes.

"I came here because of a prophecy," Snowpaw hissed. "The moonlit thread led me here for a reason and I have to find out why," she explained.

She paused... a thought entered her mind. *The prophecy led me here... so it must have been to meet this cat.*

"You're part of the prophecy aren't you?" Snowpaw narrowed her eyes.

The tabby warrior stirred only slightly, and for a moment his body looked a little faint, but his gaze stayed hard.

"Please, you have to tell me what you know. The clans depend on it!" She begged.

The cat narrowed his amber eyes and growled.

"Young cat, you've travelled too far for your own good. Turn around and go home. I'll keep quiet, just don't set foot on Snowclan territory again," he warned before stalking away.

"Wait!" Snowpaw called out.

She leaped forward, but the tom turned around the corner outside and something told Snowpaw that even if she looked he wouldn't be there anymore.

Snowpaw looked at her paws. Thoughts of the encounter swirling through her mind. Suddenly it made sense. *What if he's a Starclan cat?* His pelt wasn't exactly solid; there was a faintness to it, and his pelt had a gleam like stars, and he only smelled *faintly* of Snowclan. *He must have tried really hard to hide all that from me, otherwise I wouldn't feel threatened.*

There was a shuffle outside that caught Snowpaw's attention. She looked up. A head suddenly peered from the entrance.

"Wha–!" Snowpaw yelped, taken by surprise.

The figure slipped inside the cave.

"No need to be alarmed. I'm not a ghost," the slim cat replied glancing at her.

Snowpaw's breath caught in her throat when she recognised the blue fur and faint tabby markings. *So you're finally here.*